

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #1364/01 1172223
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 272223Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8493
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8817
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2097
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 0071
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 7404
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 8141
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0775
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001364

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: GOC CELEBRATES DON MARIO'S ARREST, BUT CONCERNS
REMAIN

REF: A. 09BOGOTA1248
[1](#)B. 09BOGOTA852
[1](#)C. 09BOGOTA519

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) GOC officials celebrated the April 15 arrests of major narcotraffickers Daniel Rendon Herrera (aka "Don Mario") and Jose Leonardo Munoz (alias "Douglas"), noting that the detentions will disrupt drug flows in northern Colombia and send an important message to the public that no one is invincible. The arrests will also help prevent the emerging criminal groups from developing into the national security threat posed by the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the Medellin and Cali cartels. Still, GOC officials worry the arrests will feed the rising violence between drug trafficking organizations, especially in Medellin. Press reports suggested Rendon would be rapidly extradited to the United States, but we have yet to formally request his extradition. End Summary

DISRUPTS DRUG FLOW, BUT VIOLENCE MAY SPIKE

[1](#)2. (C) Before his April 15 capture (reftel A), Daniel Rendon Herrera had consolidated control over most narcotrafficking in Antioquia and Choco, made major inroads in Cesar and La Guajira, and started to expand southward to gain access to trafficking routes via the Pacific coast, Venezuela, and Brazil (reftel B). Officials from the Colombian National Police/Directorate of Antinarcotics (CNP/DIRAN/ANTIN) told DEA officials they believe Rendon's arrest will--at least temporarily--disrupt the flow of drugs in the northern areas of Choco, Antioquia, Cordoba, and Sucre. Rendon's ability to forge cooperation among major criminal groups had facilitated large drug shipments. They predicted that Rendon's large drug trafficking organization (DTO) will now fragment as new leaders fight for control.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite their celebration of the arrests, CNP officials said the detentions of Rendon and Munoz--a key leader of Medellin-based rival DTO "Oficina de Envigado"--will trigger more violence between and within major DTOs. ANTIN officials anticipate increased murders as emerging criminal groups (ECGs) wrestle to seize Rendon's trafficking routes and drug production zones. ANTIN

identifies the Gulfs of Uraba and Morrosquillo on the northwest coast, Cucuta in the northeast, and Choco and Narino on the Pacific as likely sites for increased violence.

In addition, Medellin Mayor Alonso Salazar told us it was possible the arrest would feed Medellin's already rising murder rate, which largely stems from infighting among narco lieutenants eager to replace their extradited or arrested former bosses. Sixteen people were murdered in the city from April 24-26.

NEVERTHELESS, A POSITIVE STEP

¶4. (C) Salazar told us that many in Colombia had come to believe that Rendon was invincible--the GOC had been targeting him for well over a year. His capture sends an important message to the public that no one is beyond the reach of the state. CNP Carabinero Major Jorge Blanco added that the GOC's continued success at capturing emerging criminal group (ECG) leaders like Rendon prevents ECGs from developing the national or regional structures that characterized the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the cartels of the 1980s and 1990s. Keeping the groups fractured, he argued, prevents the groups from threatening the Colombian state and makes narcotrafficking a question of law enforcement, not national security.

¶5. (C) Still, CNP officials admit that despite Rendon's high profile, his capture will probably have a negligible long-term effect on cocaine production or exports. Blanco said the relatively decentralized nature of most DTOs and the increasingly segmented nature of the cocaine business (reftel B) make the loss of an individual leader, even one as

powerful as Rendon, less damaging to the overall drug business. Similarly, Salazar cautioned that the GOC has scored many successes against narcotraffickers, but has been less successful against narcotrafficking.

EXTRADITION, NOT PEACE ROLE, IN FUTURE

¶6. (C) Leading daily "El Tiempo" reported on April 19th that Rendon had offered to become a "peace agent" (gestor de paz) and to demobilize 6,000 armed men. (NOTE: This number does not appear credible, as the CNP before his arrest estimated Rendon had 1000-2000 men - reftel B). Rendon insisted he was a paramilitary leader, not a narcotrafficker, and should qualify for the Justice and Peace Law. Prior to his arrest, Rendon reached out to then-GOC Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo to start peace talks, but was rebuffed. Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos said Rendon would be excluded from the JPL process for having committed crimes after his initial demobilization in 2007 (reftel A). "El Tiempo" suggested Rendon would be extradited to the U.S. shortly, but his extradition request has not yet been submitted. The Judicial Attache expects the process to take the normal 12-18 months.

BROWNFIELD